THE TIGER, THE BRAHMIN & THE JACKAL

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THE TIGER, THE BRAHMIN & THE JACKAL

For Rebecca

(K.L.)

For Julia

(D.K.)

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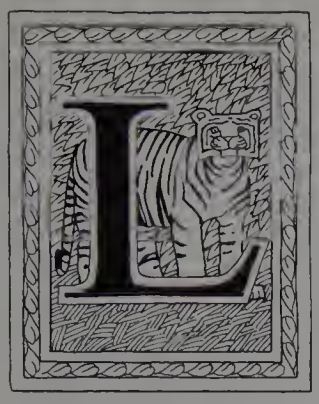
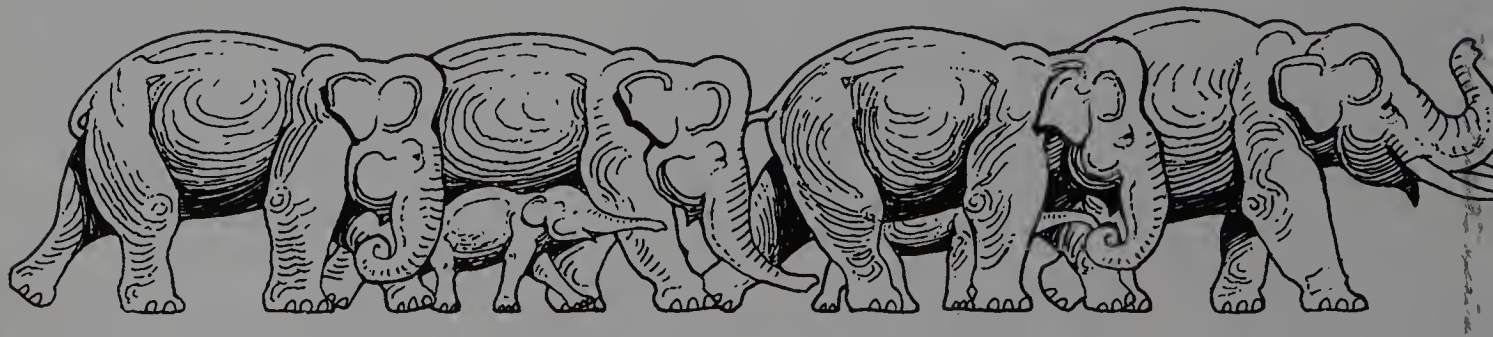
Retold by Kath Lock
Illustrated by David Kennett



ong, long ago in India a hungry tiger was prowling through the jungle thinking of what he might be able to catch for his next meal, when suddenly he found himself caught in a trap. He thrashed about furiously, angry at being so easily caught, but no matter how he threw himself around and no matter how he scratched and clawed at his enclosure, he was unable to set himself free. Eventually he lay quietly except for an occasional whimper.

A poor Brahmin was passing by when he heard the animal whimpering, so he approached the cage. Being careful not to go too near, he peered in at the trapped tiger.

"Oh Holy one," beseeched the tiger, "please help me from this trap. I was walking innocently through the jungle, when this dreadful thing happened to me. I cannot imagine why anyone would want to ambush me, for I do no harm. I lead a simple and meagre life, eating only those animals which have died and which lie on the floor of the jungle. If you save me from the death which is certain to befall me, I will be your slave forever."



"Oh, no!" said the Brahmin. "You would most certainly eat me if I were to set you free."

"But you are wrong," replied the tiger. "Why would I harm someone who is kind enough to save me from a piteous end? I am old and my claws and teeth are worn. I would harm no one — no one at all. But especially, I would do no harm to someone who would save me."

He continued to plead and to whimper, till eventually the dreadful sobbing wrenched at the Brahmin's kind heart and he set the tiger free.

"Now I have something for my meal!" shouted the tiger, immediately he was free. "How foolish you are to trust a hungry tiger. Truly, you deserve to be eaten, lean though you are."

The Brahmin pleaded for his life, but the tiger would not free him; however he did agree to the Brahmin's suggestion that they take the argument to three independent judges. Secretly the tiger thought that he would be able to eat all four, the Brahmin and three judges, for his meal.

First the Brahmin approached a tall tree, which was shading their path.

"Oh noble tree!" he began. "We need advice, which you in your great wisdom can provide."

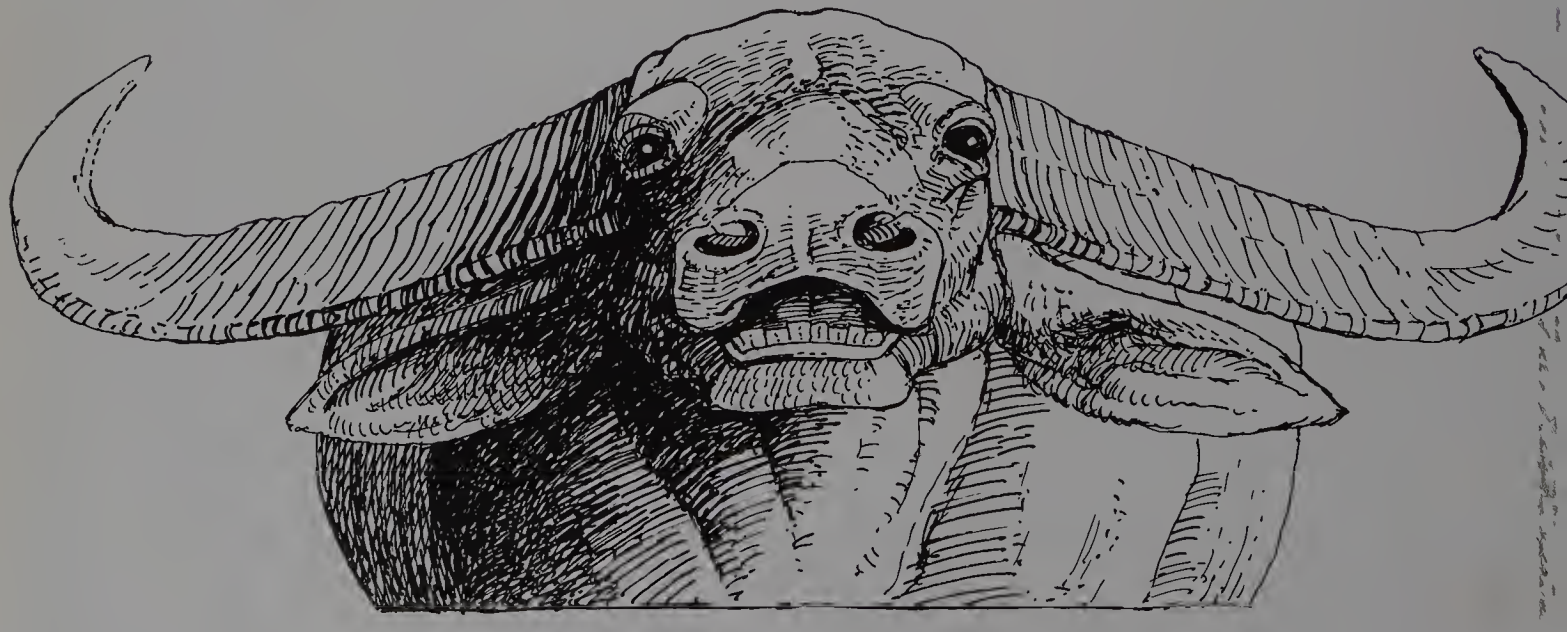
"I will not help you," replied the tree. "I have been standing here for hundreds of years and all that people and animals have done is to tear strips of bark and branches from me. Why would I want to help either you or the tiger, when no person or animal has ever done anything kind for me. Find someone else to solve your problem."

The Brahmin and the tiger walked on through the jungle. The tiger's eyes were aglint in anticipation. The Brahmin's eyes were just a little worried-looking.

They soon came to a buffalo, which was grazing by the river's edge.

"Oh beast of great size and strength, we need your help to solve our problem. You have seen many animals live and die, and you surely have the knowledge which is needed to aid us in our dilemma."

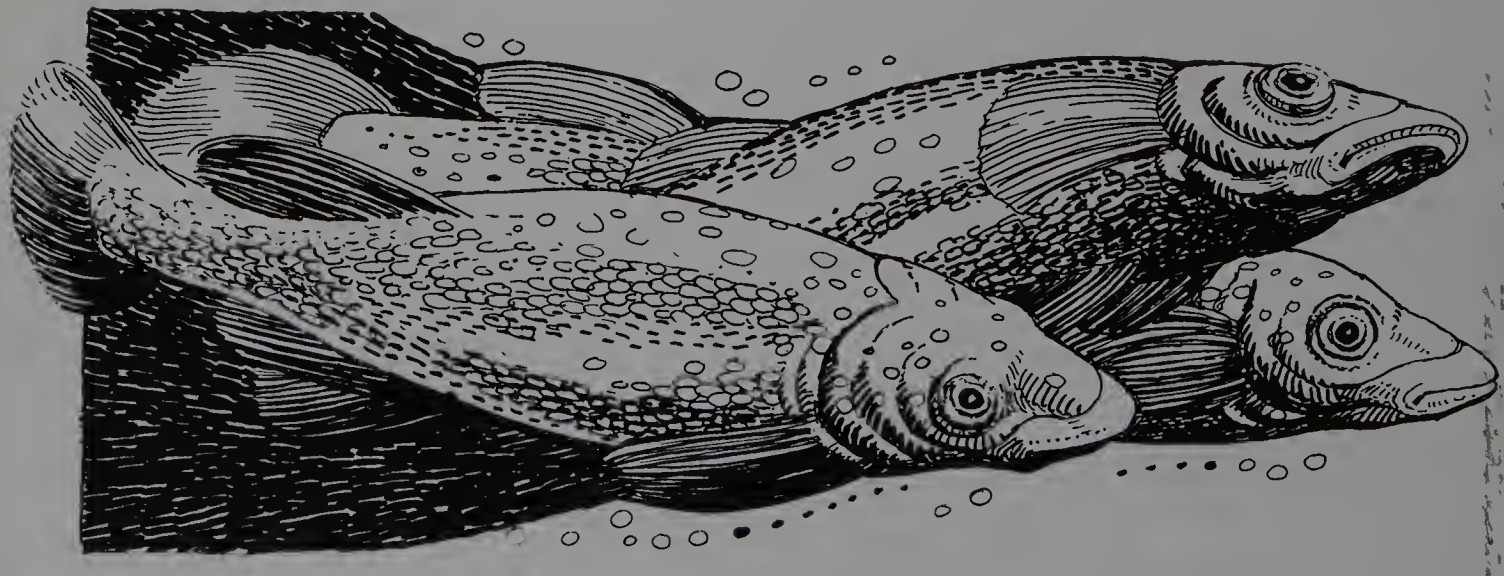
When the buffalo heard their problem he laughed at the Brahmin. "How foolish you were, oh Holy one. Everyone knows that tigers cannot be trusted. If you set a tiger free, then he deserves to have you for his next meal."



In desperation, the Brahmin spoke to the river.

"Oh great river, you have passed through many regions, learning as you travel from the mountains to the sea. Help us to resolve our problem, I beg of you."

"Well," said the river, slowly. "Those of us who help others cannot always expect kindness in return. For thousands of years I have flowed through this land, bringing fresh water to all and providing fish and bird life; yet look how I am treated. Nobody cares for me. Only a fool expects justice."



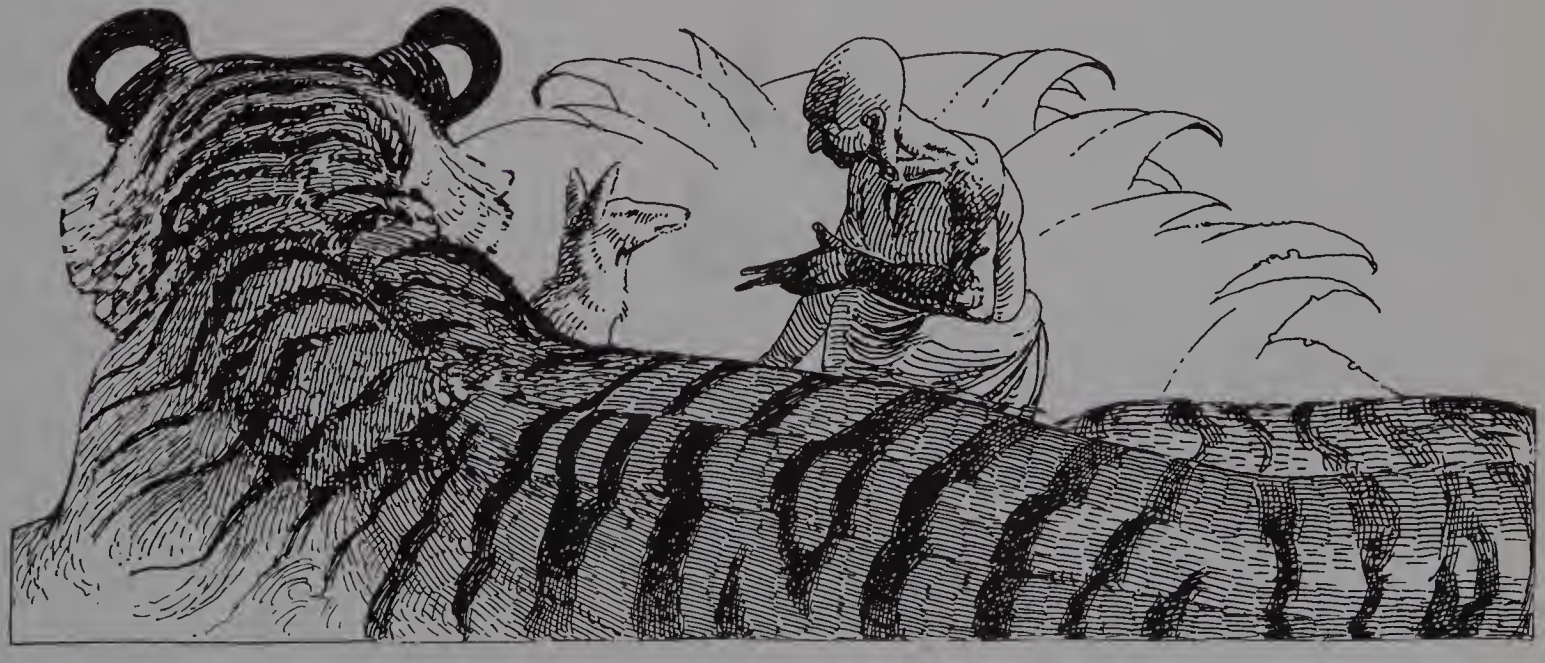
The Brahmin was distressed, but he had agreed with the tiger that their problem should be presented to three judges and this had already been done. No matter that the tiger had deceived him, the Brahmin was an honest man and turned to the beast, ready to be his next meal.

At that moment, a jackal happened by.

"Oh Holy one. You look so sad. What terrible thing has befallen you that you should look this way?"

And so the Brahmin told his story while the tiger listened with a broad smile on his face. It would not be long before he had a grand feast. What did it matter if he waited a little longer while the story was explained?

He knew the jackal to be a devious creature and was sure that she too would tell the Brahmin that he had been foolish, and that he deserved to be eaten. Perhaps he would have to share the skinny body with the jackal, but there was enough for two.



When the Brahmin had finished, the jackal looked quizzically at them both.

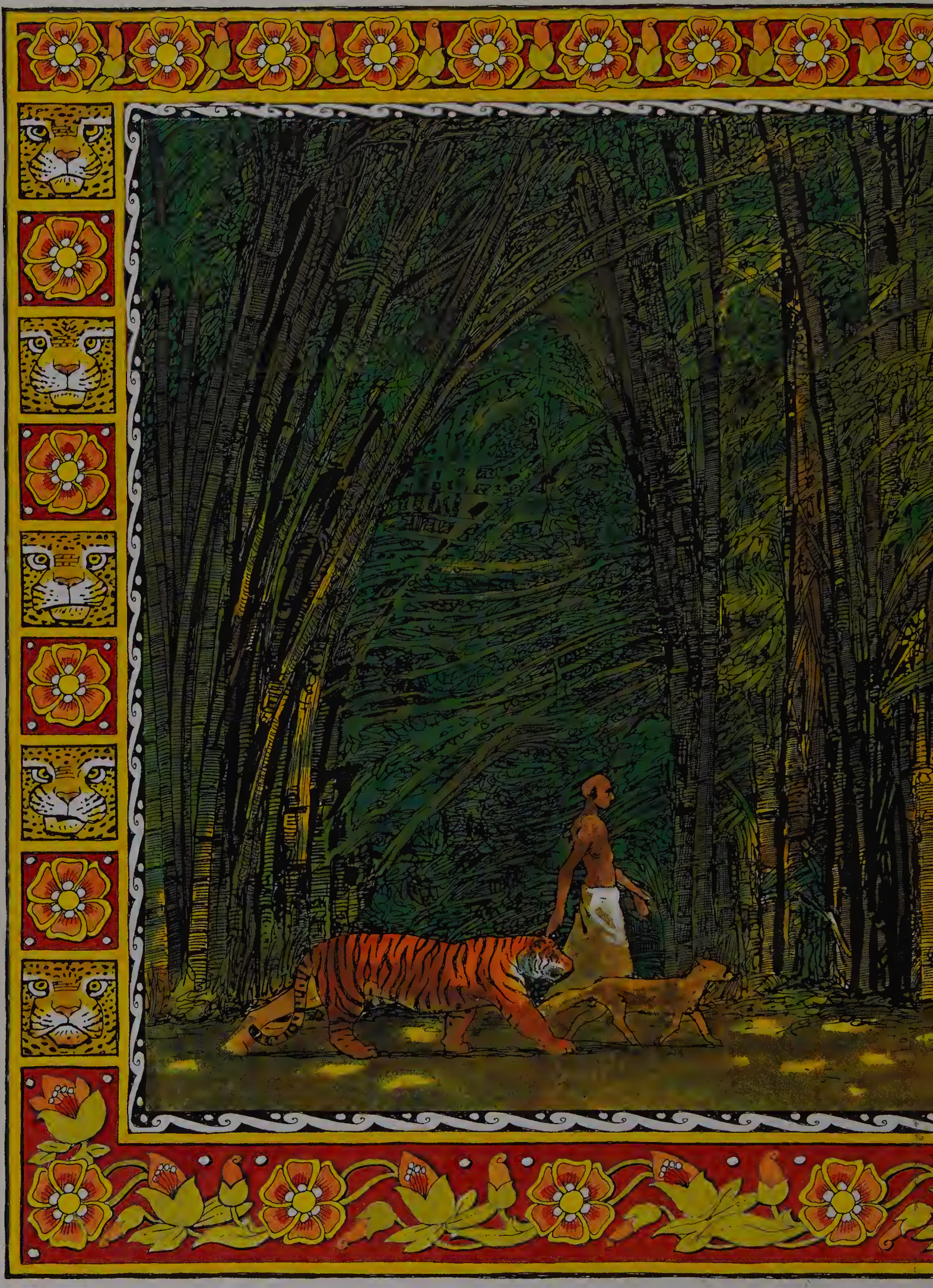
"I don't understand," said the jackal. "Why would the tiger help you out of a trap? Please explain it more clearly."

So the tiger explained the story. By this time he was getting a little excited. He had not expected to wait this long for his meal.

"I don't understand," repeated the jackal. "You will have to explain more slowly and more precisely."

So the two of them tried to explain the situation to the jackal, but with no more success than they had each had in their own telling.

"No, it's simply no good," replied the jackal. "You will have to take me to where it happened. Perhaps then I will be able to understand."



So the tiger, the Brahmin and the jackal walked through the jungle to where the empty trap lay carefully hidden. Because the tiger and the Brahmin knew it was there, they were able to find it without being caught.

"Now," said the jackal, "explain it to me just as it happened."

The Brahmin went through the story again, slowly, for he knew that his life would last only as long as this final telling of the tale.

"This is very complicated," moaned the jackal. "I feel sure that the only way I can understand it is if you re-enact it for me. I do not yet understand, oh Holy one, why you were in this trap waiting for the tiger to come along. Perhaps you had better go right back to the beginning of the story; back to when you first came into the jungle."

At this, the tiger became impatient. He had been anticipating his meal for a long time and he was very hungry.

"Don't be so silly. How can you be so dim-witted? Why would the Brahmin be waiting in the trap for me? You are the stupidest jackal I have ever seen. I thought jackals were supposed to be wily creatures who were able to trick their prey into lying down and giving themselves up. Surely you must be the runt of your litter. You must have been a cast-out from your pack. It's a wonder they didn't eat you instead of sending you away. Don't you understand? *I* was the one in the trap."

"Of course, how silly of me," said the jackal as she scratched herself behind the ear. "You, tiger, were in the trap asking advice of the Brahmin . . ."

The tiger jumped in a rage.

"You imbecilic creature. Listen! I was walking through the jungle, thinking about what I would have for my next meal."

"Yes," said the jackal, still looking puzzled, "just how were you walking along? Perhaps you could show me."

"Very well," replied the angry tiger. "I was walking through the jungle, just like this. I was looking to the left and to the right, just like this, searching for something to eat." He stopped and looked at the jackal. "You know, it's several days since I have had anything substantial to eat, and I am very hungry. This is getting tedious."

"Just a little while longer," said the jackal. "We will soon solve the problem."

"Well, as I said," the tiger continued, "I was looking to the left and to the right, when I thought I heard something high up in that tree just near the clearing. I looked up and saw the branches move ever so slightly. So I crept forward like this, keeping my eye on the spot where the branches were moving, being careful not to let whatever it was hear me."

The jackal and the Brahmin watched in silence while the tiger showed exactly what had happened and, just as before, the tiger walked into the trap.

"Ah! I understand," said the jackal. "Now I know exactly what happened. Perhaps, oh Holy one, you would care to continue your journey?"

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The TIGER, The BRAHMIN & The JACKAL

A tiger convinces a Brahmin to free him from a trap. Of course, he really plans to have the Brahmin for his next meal — but a wily jackal has other ideas.

The treacherous tiger, the trusting Brahmin and the quick-witted jackal hold the reader in suspense right to the clever conclusion of this tale from India.

Kath Lock

Listening to traditional stories is one of Kath Lock's best-loved memories of childhood in a country town. Later in life, Kath chose to study children's literature. Her research for a Master of Education degree brought her back to many tales she could recall from her childhood.

Kath has written six children's books and has five more on the way. She lives in the country town of Riverton, South Australia and is a primary school teacher.

David Kennett

David Kennett studied illustration in Adelaide, South Australia. So far he has illustrated 14 children's books. He thinks that illustration should have emotion in it, and the series of folk tales he has completed show exactly what he means by this.

In the illustrations for this series, David has used a variety of media, including pen and ink wash, acrylic and some pencil.

David lives in Adelaide, but his books are sold around the world.

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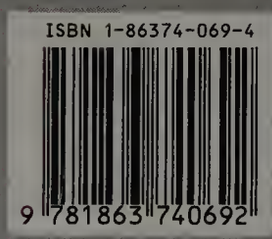

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